

Letter from Alexander Graham Bell to Mabel Hubbard Bell, November 29, 1904, with transcript

ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL TO MABEL (Hubbard) BELL Beinn Bhreagh, C. B.

Tuesday, November 29, 1904. Dear Mabel:

We tried to crush in a tetrahedral frame today with our vacuum box — without success because we could not secure good rarefaction — only slight sucking action was manifest — great leakage occurring around the edges of the oil-cloth used to cover it. Surprised that the mercury gauge gave no indication of the extent of the rarefaction — I examined it closely. Some water had come through the tube just before we commenced exhausting the air in box — so that the small glass tube was filled with a succession of air-bubbles with some water. Examination showed that the water had frozen about the edges of the air-bubbles. Took out tube and tried to blow through it — found it had become completely plugged in a few moments.

Tried then to stop leaks round edges of oil-cloth by freezing the whole thing solidly to the box around edges. This was easily accomplished. Then built up a wall of snow around it — poured on a little water — and in a few minutes we had a solid wall of ice around edge which seemed to defy leakage — left it to harden for half an hour — while we dried and warmed the glass tube and mercury by annex stove. Then tried once more. Mercury did not rise in tube at all — oil-cloth over frame showed no signs of being sucked in while all the time the water ran freely from the iron tube 25 feet lower than the box. We cannot afford any more time to this 2 subject now — so I ordered the vacuum box into the annex for the winter !! Here endeth the experiments to find the account of rarefaction that our frames will stand — at least for the present.

Mr. McInnis and the men on the place held an Indignation meeting today — all by themselves — in Mr. McInnis' office — about the treatment received by Charles Thomson

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in Sydney. They prepared an address or resolution — or something of that kind — to be presented to Charles at the Wednesday evening meeting to be held tomorrow. Mr. Mitchell and I — as Americans — did not join the meeting — so as to leave the matter in the hands of the people here — without suggestion from us. Our time will come tomorrow. Mr. Mitchell will typewrite the matter in the morning — and Mr. McInnis will take the document over the Bay to secure the signatures of Baddeck people.

Mr. McCurdy has finished his report — and tomorrow afternoon, McInnis, McCurdy and I will have a conference with Manchester about a Farm Department. Mr. McCurdy thinks — and so do I — that the simplest and best way would be to rent the farm to Mr. Manchester — letting him buy from us at an appraised valuation the live stock on the place — implements — wagons and etc. Give up the stable and hire horses as Mr. Carruth does — for the time we are here — hiring a man or men to look after them and feed them during that time alone. If 3 Mr. Manchester cannot supply us there can be no difficulty in hiring horses by the month. There is no reason why we should go to the expense of keeping them all the year round. Nothing will be settled without consulting you. If you object to renting the farm for a term of years — say three at least — then we must either try a Farm Department with Manchester in charge — but this will involve a further outlay of \$2000 or \$3000 for working capital. It will also involve paying him a salary — with all the responsibility on our shoulders — (and we cannot farm) or letting the place run wild — and keeping it for beauty and not for farming at all.

There is no use continuing on old plan — for we cannot run this place — or any portion of it — for profit.

1. I think best plan is rent the farm for the price of the taxes — or whatever may be decided on. Let it be Mr. Manchester's place. Let him have the practical ownership of all that part to be used for farm purposes — and let him buy all the live stock and etc., — we allowing him to pay for them in installments if he cannot raise the money required.

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2. Keep nursery Department just as it is, with Davidson in charge of Pleasure Department at Point, and south shore.

3. Continue the Sheep Department till next fall to give it a fair chance. I do not think that John McKillop can make it pay its expenses — in which case it will die from lack of ability to sustain itself — and can be turned 4 over to the farm — or Farm Department.

The Manager's duties will be so lightened that if all goes well with the debts — Mr. McInnis will see the propriety of renewing his request for retirement. We can agree and give him a good send off — for he has been with us for many years, and has been faithful and honest and has served us to the best of his ability. I think he has given up the idea of retiring to a farm of his own — and I think that he is wise — for he is no farmer. We can help him — when the proper times comes — to carry out his present ideal — of running a SHOE STORE in Baddeck! He and his daughter can handle it together — and they would prefer to live in town. This at least is what Mr. McCurdy reports.

When McInnis resigns — say next year in the autumn we can do without a Manager.

We will be relieved of the burden and expense of Farm and Sheep Department.

What is left of the estate can be run for us by Mr. Davidson — and we can be saved the expense of Mr. McInnis's salary.

Store boats and etc., in Warehouse — and lock it up when we leave. Hire man to look after boats while we are here — but don't keep him all the year round.

Have a stable for our own use, and hire horses for the time we are here — and man to attend to them — but don't keep them through the year. When we leave — return the horses 5 to owners, discharge man — and lock up the stable. We will then have to provide feed for the horses only while we use them. If Mr. Manchester is equal to the occasion he will provide us with horses — if not — we can do as the Carruths do — and hire horses

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from elsewhere. Mr. McCurdy reports that there will be no difficulty in hiring suitable horses for three or four months.

I am opposed to the idea of our trying to run the farm ourselves — and would prefer to rent it to a good man. I am opposed to our trying to keep cattle ourselves — and have no doubt we can buy all the milk we want from Manchester or other farmers.

We leave Friday at noon — and I have secured an ordinary sleeping car (not a private car) to take us to Boston. It is of course a private car in the sense that it belongs to me for the nonce.

Your loving husband, Alec.